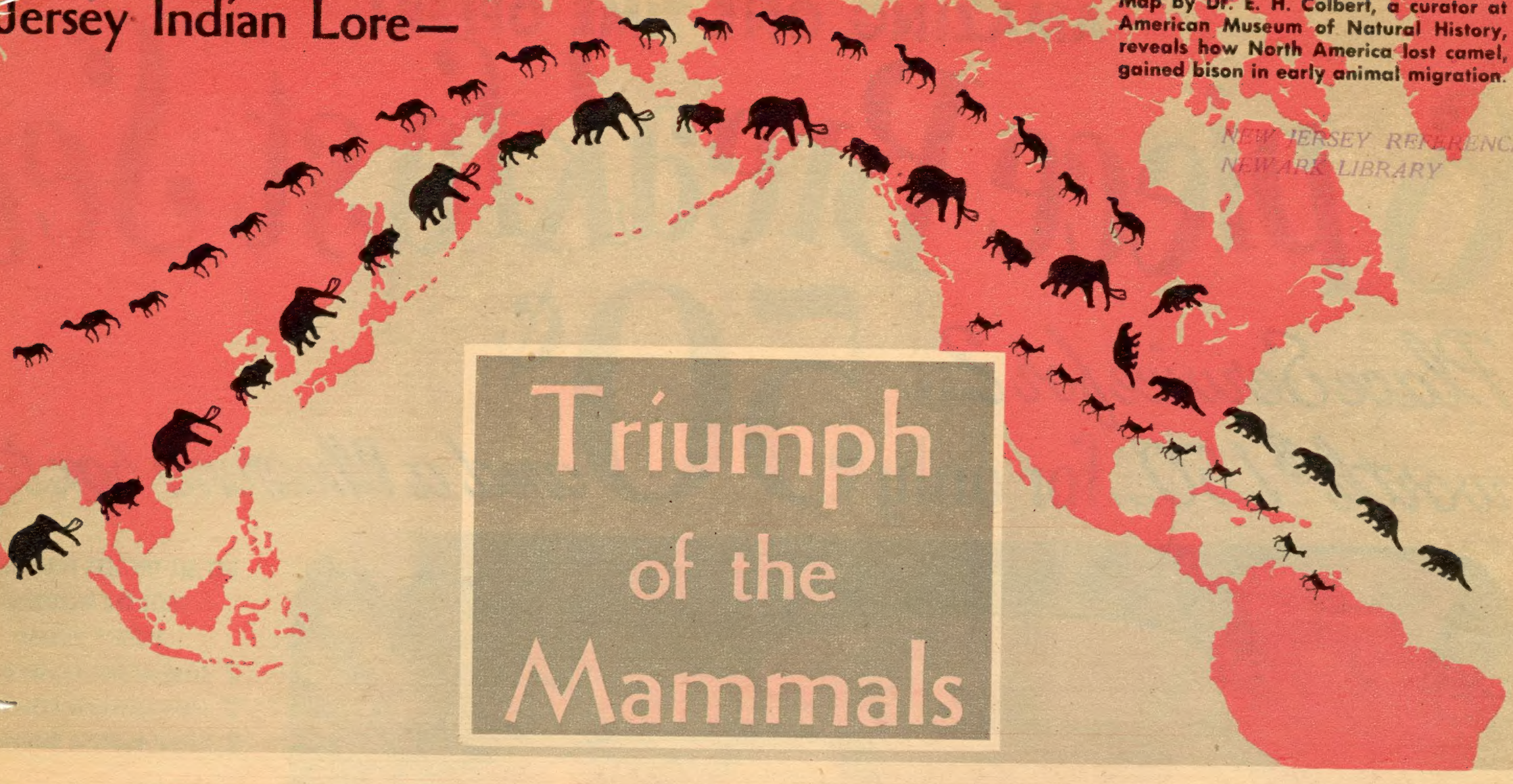
N.J. Native Americans (Philhower Series)

Jersey Indian Lore—



Map by Dr. E. H. Colbert, a curator at American Museum of Natural History, reveals how North America lost camel, gained bison in early animal migration.

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Triumph of the Mammals

Legends of the Lenape Tribes Indicate Man Has Lived in This Area Many Thousand Years

BY CHARLES A. PHILHOWER

EVER stop to think when you are coming home late at night how only a few hundred years ago Indians may have stalked wild game right in your backyard? And if you let your imagination carry you still farther back, you might envision a stone age man battling a mastodon on the spot where that big tree now grows on your front [illegible] long time ago.

There are three large divisions of time as related to the history of man on earth: First, the dawn period, called eolithic; second, the old stone age, called paleolithic, and third, the new stone age, called neolithic. While the first appearance of man on the earth may go back in the dawn era to about 500,000 years ago, his first appearance in New Jersey probably is limited to the new stone age.

Some 30,000 years ago the northern part of our state was covered with a great sheet of ice. The movement of this ice reached southward to a line curving to the northwestward across the state from Raritan Bay to the Delaware River somewhat south of Belvidere. About 15,000 years ago the ice receded. Sandy knolls, gravel, stones and rocks rounded by the action of ice and water are evidences of the ice cap.

There were many animals here after the glacier left which continued to live in this area for a long period. Among these animals were certain kinds of tigers, buffaloes, moose, lions, camels, sloths, horses, antelopes, dinosaurs, mammoths and mastodons. In the course of time certain of these breeds migrated to other areas of the world now thought of as their native habitat. Remains of some of these animals have been found in New Jersey, especially the bones of the elephant-like animals, the mammoth and the mastodon and also the dinosaur. A dinosaur's skeleton may be seen in the State Museum at Trenton.

This is the first in a series of articles about the Indians who once populated this state, written especially for The Newark Sunday News Magazine by Charles A. Philhower, noted schoolman and authority on Indian lore. In subsequent articles weekly, Mr. Philhower will tell why the Lenni Lenape tribes settled in New Jersey; how they lived, stalked game and cultivated food. He also will reveal their struggles with the white man and explain how the relics he has found here interpret Indian culture.

THERE is evidence, while not of a decisive character, that man lived here at the same time as the mastodon and mammoth. Many skeletons of mastodons have been found in New Jersey, especially in the northern part and also in the southeastern counties of New York and in Eastern Pennsylvania. In a small glacial lake near Otisville, N. Y., a complete skeleton of a mastodon was found when the Erie Railroad drained a pond to lay some track.

An old gentleman of the community told the story that his father as a boy was accustomed to row out on this little lake in a boat. He would often see something white down in the lake when the water was low. When he struck this object with an oar there was a sound somewhat

Diorama at American Museum of Natural History in New York shows how primitive man stalked huge beasts which roamed Jersey.

This giant mastodon depicted by Charles Knight at American Museum of Natural History is similar to one described in ancient legend of the Lenni Lenapes.

This rare photograph is of Chief War Eagle, a direct descendant of the original Jersey settlers.

like hitting a barrel. When the lake was drained this object was proved to be the skeleton of a mastodon and alongside it at its feet was found a dugout canoe and a crude paddle. It does not follow that the two are related but it is quite possible. that they were.

Back in 1872 in Bucks County, Pa., four and a half miles east of Doylestown, one Barnard Hansell found in a plowed field a large section of a "queer stone" which also connects man with these huge beasts. This stone was part of an Indian ornament known as a gorget. The object is a flat stone, usually polished, having somewhat notched sides and edges with two holes some distance apart drilled through it near the center on a line midway on the long axis. An ornament such as this was presented by a brave to his squaw when he took her for his wife and was used by her to bind her hair in place in the back.

Nine years later, Mr. Hansell found a second piece of the gorget which, when applied to the other part, completed the object. This gorget was decorated by etchings scratched on each side which have considerable significance. On one side were a thunder bird, a turtle, a fish, animals, pipes, snowshoe, wickwams, etc., and on the reverse side a hairy mammoth with primitive men shooting arrows at the animal. There are pine trees in the foreground, the sun is shining and a shaft of lightning is directed from a distance downward toward the head of the beast.

This stone for many years was in the collection of the late Henry Paxson at Buckingham, Pa., until it was bought at auction by the Mercer Museum at Doylestown for $650. The specimen can be seen there today. This gorget is circumstantial evidence of early man's contact with the primitive animals of this area.

ANOTHER pertinent suggestion of primitive man's direct knowledge of the mastodon is found in the folklore of the Lenape or Delaware Indians. There is a legend of the "Yahquawhee" or mastodon which Lenape squaws and old men told to their children for a course of time unknown. The fact that these Indians had a name for the mastodon suggests vital acquaintance with the animal. Aside from the relationship of the story to the question at hand, it is in itself an interesting legend.

According to this Indian legend, there was a large animal living among the ancient people of our land which was called Yahquawhee, a hairy elephant with large tusks. The Great Spirit, the Manito, intended it should become a beast of burden and of benefit to mankind. However, the Yahquawhee rebelled. It would travel long distances and destroy fields of corn so that there was starvation in the land. The animals of the forest and field also were menaced by it and in consequence a war was decreed against the Yahquawhee.

All the other animals came to the aid of man in his attempt to kill off the mastodons in the land and the Great Spirit pronounced it good. The battle began and the Manito came down from above and sat upon the mountain top to witness the conflict. Man and the beasts of the field on the one hand, and Yahquawhee on the other, fought for days.

SLOWLY but surely the mastodons were rounded up and driven into the valleys and swamp lands. There was slaughter without respite. The great animals mired down in the wet lands and many sank of their own

(Continued on Following Page)

Fight between aborigines and mastodon described in Lenape legend is depicted above by artist and below on gorget stone carved many years ago by Indian.

Sketch from New Jersey State Museum at Trenton shows how Indians here once hollowed out canoes.

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Jersey Indians

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)

weight and were drowned. The fighting was so severe the streams and the marshes ran red with blood. The Manito signaled his favor. Immediately the men fought with added strength and courage until all were killed except one huge bull Yahquawhee who seemed to withstand every onslaught.

The Manito, seeing that this huge Yahquawhee could not be undone, shot a bolt of lightning from the skies at the forehead of the great beast. Even this did not kill the huge animal but it frightened him so much that he ran off to the northland and tradition says that he lives there to this day.

The Manito, seated on the mountain top to witness it all, noted how great and far reaching were the effects of this battle. He decided to do something to commemorate the historic event. In his wisdom he caused a little plant to grow in the river valleys and marshes, the fruit of which when crushed gives forth a juice, red like the blood shed in the slaughter. It is the pakihm or cranberry.

THROUGHOUT New Jersey stone implements termed "turtle backs," resembling the hand hatchets of England and the Continent, are not unusual. In the glacial drift and along the terminal morain of the glacier, many stones are found that have been flaked at a very early period. The flake scars on these specimens are covered with a film or polish called patina, which is indicative of great age.

There are archeologists such as the late Dr. Charles C. Abbott of Trenton who think that argillite spears and arrowheads plentiful in this state show by their weathered surfaces that they were made a long time ago.

The Big-Buffalo tradition given in Rembrandt Peale's writings on the mammoth contributes to our query regarding the age of man in New Jersey. The language is suggestive of the thinking of the mind of ancient man.

"Ten thousand moons ago when naught but gloomy forests covered this land of the sleeping sun," that legend recalls, "a race of animals existed, huge as the frowning precipice, cruel as the bloody panther, swift as the descending eagle, and terrible as the angel of night. The pines crashed beneath their feet and the lake shrank when they slaked their thirst. The forceful javelin in vain was hurled and the barbed arrow fell harmless by their sides . . ."

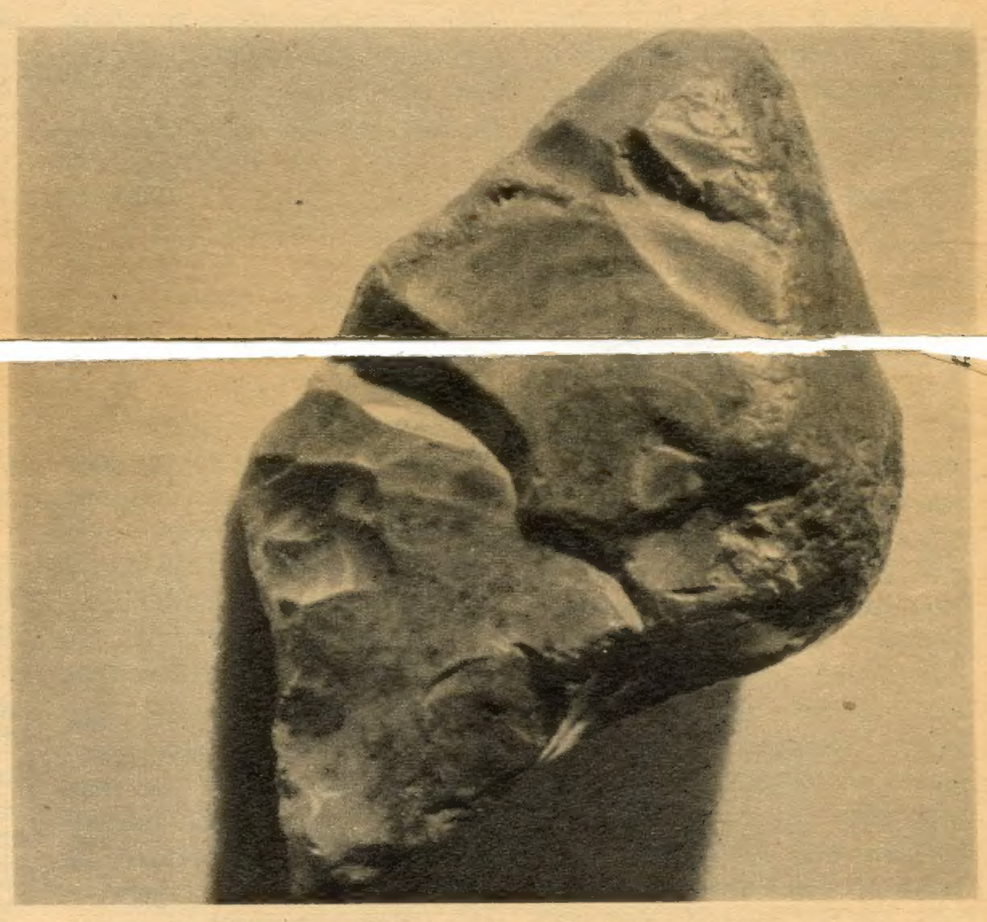
THERE is a nucleus of fact in all fiction. Witness the evidence in fossil remains of gigantic elephants, huge dragons, flying reptiles and the like. Even the imagination of man falls short when one scans the rock imbedded remains of the colossal animals of the past.

Man is a comparative newcomer in the great stretch of time since life first appeared on the earth millions of years ago but suggested human contacts with prehistoric animals, etchings on the Lenape stone, crude implements and the ancient Indian legends all are indications that man has lived in New Jersey many thousand years.

These articles will henceforth consider only what happened here after the Indians made their first appearance on this stage approximately 7,000 years ago.

NEXT WEEK: How the Redskins first came to New Jersey.

Charles A. Philhower, author of this series, is shown making notes on gull's nest Indian basket.



ABOVE: A hoe chipped from hard rock by early New Jersey Indians was found by Mr. Philhower on his Sussex property. Patination and wear on hoe indicate great age.

LEFT: Arrow and spearhead found around New Jersey show great skill of Indians in chipping them. These implements were made many years before white man came.